

Meetings

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Preparing Effective Meetings

A productive meeting starts before the first participant joins. Good preparation helps everyone make the best use of the time together.

Meeting Invitation Template

Purpose: <What should be achieved by the end of the meeting?>

Expected Outcome:

- ☐ Inform
- ☐ Discuss
- ☐ Decide
- ☐ Plan next steps

Agenda:

- 5 min – ...
- 10 min – ...
- 5 min – Summary & action items

Preparation (optional):

- Can I prepare something, e.g., a diagram, as a base for discussion?
- Read: <link>
- Think about: ...

Participants: <Who needs to attend and why?>

After the meeting we should have:

- Decision(s):
- Action item(s):
- Owner(s):

Prepare the problem

If you're asking others for help, invest a little time before the meeting to structure the problem.

Instead of arriving with "I'm stuck," prepare:

- A short problem statement
- Relevant background information
- A diagram or sketch of the current situation
- Options you have already considered
- Specific questions you would like answered

Many problems become much easier to solve once they are clearly explained. Sometimes, the preparation alone leads to the solution before the meeting even starts.

Define the desired outcome

Every meeting should have a clear objective.

Instead of:

- Discuss architecture

Prefer:

- Decide which architecture to implement.
 - Review the design and identify open questions.
 - Agree on the next implementation steps.
-

Share an agenda in advance

A simple agenda helps participants prepare and keeps the discussion focused.

For each agenda item, consider including:

- Topic
 - Goal (Inform, Discuss, Decide)
 - Owner
 - Estimated duration
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Invite the right people

Only invite people who:

- Make decisions
- Provide essential expertise
- Need the information first-hand

Everyone else can often be informed afterwards.

Share relevant material beforehand

If participants need to read a document, specification, or design, send it before the meeting.

Meeting time should be spent discussing—not silently reading slides.

Assign roles

For larger or important meetings, assigning simple roles can improve effectiveness:

- Facilitator - keeps the meeting on track.
 - Note taker - captures decisions and action items.
 - Timekeeper - helps stay within the schedule.
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Finish with clear actions

Before ending the meeting, make sure everyone knows:

- What was decided?
- What are the next actions?
- Who owns each action?
- When is it due?

A meeting is only successful if people leave with a shared understanding of what happens next.

Time Is Our Most Valuable Resource

At the heart of a healthy meeting culture is awareness:

- Meetings consume both time and money.
- Attention is a limited resource.
- Good collaboration does not always require a meeting.

By reminding ourselves of these principles regularly and openly, we create a culture where meetings serve us—not the other way around.

- Does everyone need to attend?
 - It's perfectly acceptable to ask this question—both before and during a meeting.
- 2. Is it okay to leave the meeting?
 - Yes. Leaving a meeting when the discussion is no longer relevant to you is professional.
- 3. Can we end meetings 5–10 minutes early?
 - Reflect on the discussion
 - Capture key takeaways
 - Prepare for the next task
 - Simply take a short break
- 4. Can we cancel meetings in advance?
 - Canceling a meeting that no longer provides value is a sign of respect—not a failure.

So the next time you receive a meeting invitation, take a moment to pause. A clear objective, a concise agenda, a slightly shorter meeting—or even the courage to cancel one—can make everyone's day just a little better.

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